Foreword

Mutke S., Rovira M., Romagosa I.

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The pine nut, the edible kernel of the Mediterranean stone pine, *Pinus pinea*, is one of the world's most expensive nuts. Although well known and planted since antiquity, pine nuts are still collected mainly from natural forests in the Mediterranean countries, and only recently has the crop taken the first steps to domestication as an attractive alternative on rainfed farmland in Mediterranean climate areas. Over the last century, the Mediterranean stone pine has experienced a range expansion, especially in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean Basin, as well as a large increase of planted areas in its countries of origin, both through forest restoration and by farmland afforestation. Today, the Iberian Peninsula accounts for about 75% of the stone pine area in the world, Portugal being the main pine nut producer, followed by Spain, Turkey, Lebanon and Italy. The species performs well on poor soils and needs little husbandry, it is affected by few pests or diseases and withstands adverse climatic conditions such as drought and extreme or late frosts. It is light-demanding and hence has potential as a crop in agro forestry systems in Mediterranean climate zones around the world. Knowledge about stone pine as a crop in grafted plantations is increasing as a result of ongoing research. Plantations on farmland could yield more pine nuts in the future than the natural forests and contribute to rural development and employment of local communities.

Recently, the FAO-CIHEAM Inter-Regional Cooperative Research Network on Nuts restored its sub-network on Stone pine –that had not had any activity since the 1st Symposium on Mediterranean Stone Pine held in Valladolid (Spain) in 2000 –and linked with the former Cooperative Research Network on Stone Pine Silviculture within the framework of FAO Silva Mediterranea (1987-1997). In this context, the international meeting AGROPINE2011 aimed at bringing together the main research groups and potential users in order to gather the current knowledge on Mediterranean stone pine as a nut crop and to analyse its potential and current challenges. The Meeting was organised by the FAO-CIHEAM Network on Nuts, the Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Zaragoza (IAMZ-CIHEAM), the Spanish National Institute for Agricultural and Food Research and Technology (INIA), the Institute for Agro-food Research and Technologies of Catalonia (IRTA), the Forestry and Forest Industry Services and Promotion Centre (CESEFOR, Centro de Servicios y Promoción Forestal y de su Industria de Castilla y León), and the Forest Sciences Centre of Catalonia (CTFC).

AGROPINE 2011 was held from 17 to 19 November 2011 in Valladolid, located in the northern plateau of central Spain. Valladolid is at the centre of the most important production area of pine nuts in Spain, and stone pine is its most characteristic forest tree. The Meeting was structured into two scientific sessions dealing with management of stone pine for cone production and on genetic improvement, selection and breeding of this species, and was closed by a round table discussion where challenges and opportunities of the pine nut industry and markets were discussed. On the last day a field trip was organized to visit stone pine experimental plots and grafted plantations. Thirty nine scientists, and forest and industry managers, coming from Lebanon, Portugal, Spain, Tunisia and Turkey participated in the meeting, which will hopefully be the first of a series of meetings and activities of the newly restored FAO-CIHEAM Sub-network on Mediterranean Stone Pine.

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Sven Mutke (INIA, Coordinator of the FAO-CIHEAM Subnetwork on Stone Pine)
Mercè Rovira (IRTA, Coordinator of the FAO-CIHEAM Network on Nuts)
Ignacio Romagosa (IAMZ-CIHEAM)